

## Women of the Twenties and *The Great Gatsby*

**Subject:** English Language Arts

**Grade level:** 9-12

**Rationale or Purpose:** Based upon their research of the *Teaching the American Twenties* site and the novel *The Great Gatsby*, students will evaluate the roles of women during the 1920s and write a persuasive essay. Life in the twenty-first century is better for women than it was in the American Twenties: defend, refute or explain.

**Materials:**

Computer with internet access, butcher paper, markers, paper, pens.

**Lesson Duration:** 3 class blocks.

**Objectives:** English III

- 1A-C - The student writes in a variety of forms
- 2A-E - The student uses recursive writing processes
- 4A-G - The student uses writing as a tool for learning
- 9A-B - The student reads widely, including American literature

**Activity:**

Students should begin this assignment after having read *The Great Gatsby*.

- Step 1: Students will work in small groups. Each group will receive a piece of butcher paper and divide it into three sections. In the first section each group will list each of the main female characters in *The Great Gatsby*. Using their butcher paper they will identify aspects of these characters. Their categories are: activities, jobs, interests, choices, politics, fashions, and philosophies, anything of interest.
- Step 2: Then using material in *Teaching the American Twenties*, each group will locate information on women in the twenties. Pay attention to all of the various selections in the collection. They all give some information about women. What do we know about women in the Twenties? Using their butcher paper they will continue in the second section to identify aspects of women in the twenties using the same categories and giving specific examples from the collection.
- Step 3: Each group of students will now fill out the third section of their butcher paper. Using the same categories as the first 2 sections, students will fill them in with specific examples from today—the twenty-first century.

- Step 4: Using their charts, each group will evaluate whether life is better for women today, or in the 1920s. They must be able to support their decision from the evidence on their charts. Each group will then share it's ideas and evidence with the whole class.
- Step 5: Each individual student will write an essay that defends, refutes, or explains the prompt: Life is better for women today than it was in the 1920s. They are expected to use evidence in their essay. You might want to make this a timed essay, like the SAT.

**Modification:**

You might want to post charts so that students can look at them while writing their papers. Learning disabled student essays should not be timed.

Gifted students should be required to use the novel, *The Great Gatsby* in their essay. Their essay should be a timed 25 minute essay.

**Student Product:** Butcher Paper Charts, Individual Essays

**Closure:** Essay- Students could read them aloud in a reading circle, discussing the merits of each.

**Assessment or evaluation:** Butcher paper product: did students research all of the various sections of the collection, use the characters from the novel correctly, is thinking logical and reasonable, do ideas have depth or are they superficial?

For Essay, use the new SAT Writing Essay Rubric

**Extension:** Students can put information from charts on a PowerPoint presentation that adds music, pictures, graphics and sound effects.

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